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SUPPLEMENTARY MEMORIAL

WITH REFERENCE TO

THE CLAIM OF HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF QUEBEC,

AGAINST THE

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS.

QUEBEC

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SUPPLEMENTARY MEMORIAL

WITH REFERENCE

To the claim of His Grace the Archbishop of Quebec

AGAINST THE

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS.

An attempt has been made, by means of a circumstance of no importance, devoid even of possibility, to explain the cause of the destruction, by fire, of the building in question. In support of this attempt, a fact recorded in the minutes of evidence has been cited; a fact so insignificant, that the Commissioners did not deem it necessary to give it the least attention, and which, for that reason, we had passed over in silence. This is the circumstance referred to in the evidence of the Reverend Sister St. Louis, (Appendix No. 10, page 25,) "Before entering this room (L,)" she says, "I perceived that my lantern was open, I immediately shut it before we went into the room (L)."

This room was on the fourth story, and before reaching it, the Nuns must have passed through the third story and visited the rooms on that story, and amongst others, the *Speaker's room.* When did the lantern open? Was it previous to ascending to the third story, before or after the visit to the Speaker's room? This is not stated in the evidence, doubtless because the lantern having opened without the knowledge of the Nun who carried it, she could not say when the fact occurred.

The Nuns having examined the fourth, fifth and sixth stories, as high as the garret, retraced their steps and returned to the part occupied by the community. The visit over the whole building, from the time of leaving the Speaker's room, must have occupied at least twenty minutes. "In going down," continues this Nun, "we passed near the Speaker's room on the third story. It is very probable that if there had been a light in that room, we should have seen it, if the doors of the room had been open, which I cannot state was the case."

By examination of the plan of the building, it will be perceived that the Nuns must have again passed, on returning, by the corridor upon which the Speaker's room opened, and that the door of this room was quite close to the stair-case leading from the third to the second story.

Let us now examine the bearing of the fact as stated by Sister St. Louis. As it cannot be known at what time the lantern opened, let us admit, for the sake of argument, that the lantern had been opened before the Nuns entered the Speaker's Room, or that it opened while they were in the room. Let us further suppose that a spark escaped from the open lantern, a very unlikely occurrence, particularly if the opened part was placed so as to receive the current of air caused by the Nuns as they walked along, for in that case, the spark escaping from the lantern would necessarily be blown back against the sides of the lantern. It must be remarked that what is called the *snuff*, a very considerable portion of the wick of a burning candle, is not formed when the candle is being moved about. Did the spark, escaping from the candle, ascend or descend?

Here is another question difficult of solution; but let us suppose that it did descend. This spark in falling must have lighted either upon matter liable to take fire on coming into contact with so slight a thing as a spark falling from a lantern, or upon a substance which it could not set on fire by coming into contact with it. In the first case the spark upon touching a highly inflammable substance, as for example, *shavings*, must either have spontaneously set fire to it or be extinguished immediately, and the fire so communicated must have spread with greater rapidity from the circumstance of the room in question containing a good quantity of shavings.

In the second case, if the spark lighted upon a matter not easily set on fire, as for example upon wood, it must have been extinguished immediately, for every one knows that a spark of this kind is extinguished as soon as it comes in contact with a substance either uninflammable or which does not easily take fire. Experience shows us, besides, that it is more than probable that sparks of this kind set fire neither to wood nor shavings, nor even straw, because these substances are not sufficiently inflammable. It might be otherwise in the case of a spark falling upon dry linen, because linen then is like tinder. If a spark fall from a pipe, the case is different again, because such a spark is but a quantity more or less considerable, of burning tobacco, which continues to burn after its descent according to the laws of gravitation upon the bodies which are beneath it. The particle of tobacco, nourishing the fire it contains, not only preserves its vigour but even forms a species of focus, by contact with which a substance not easily inflammable, as for instance, wool, might take fire.

If then, to continue the supposition, a spark escaping from the lantern set fire to the Speaker's Room, the fire must have made some progress when twenty minutes afterwards, the Nuns, on their return, passed in front of or near this room. If the door of the room were open they would either have seen the light produced by the flames among the shavings, or have perceived the strong and peculiar smell of the smoke of wood which is being consumed before flames are produced, and the Nun tells us, as do also those who accompanied her, that they neither saw any light nor perceived the smoke.

If the door of the Speaker's Room was shut when the Nuns passed this room on their return, it is evident that this same door was opened after the departure of the Nuns. For, supposing it to have been closed, how was it possible for the watchman Rousseau who first of all perceived the light of the fire, to have seen it in Richelieu Street, that is to say in the Street opposite to St. Olivier Street, upon which the Speaker's Room fronted?

Looking at the plan, it will be seen that the Speaker's Room fronted upon St. Olivier Street; that this room was separated from the Chapel by a corridor upon which the door of the Speaker's Room opened, opposite to a door leading to the chapel traversing the width of this corridor. This was the only place through which Rousseau, looking across the chapel could see into the Speaker's Room. He expresses himself thus, (Deposition No. 11, page 26), "About "a quarter or twenty minutes after nine, in returning from St. Olivier Street, "after having examined, in passing, the front of the building, where I perceived "no light, and as I arrived at the corner of Richelieu Street, after having come "up Côte-à-Coton, I perceived a light in one of the North East windows of the "chapel. I did not pay much attention to it, thinking it was the light carried "by the Nuns in going their rounds. I then went as far as the door of the "Chapel and a few steps farther. Then I turned round to see if this light was "that which the Nuns might be carrying. Perceiving a great light by the win-"dow to the North East of the door, I got up on a pile of wood and discovered "that the fire was in a heap of shavings in one of the rooms to the right, behind "the Chapel, and the doors of which were open." (This room has been proved by other witnesses examined to have been the Speaker's Room). The door, then, was open; it was opened, then, after the departure of the Nuns, by some one in the building, and it was that person who removed the piece of wood placed above the latch of the entrance gate in St. Olivier Street; it was the same person who a second time unbarred this door and left it open three or four inches, according to the statement of Rousseau; and lastly, it was this same person who set fire to the building and who escaped by the door which was left ajar. For, unless this explanation be accepted, how can we account for this strange opening and closing of the doors on two different occasions, which occurred in the building in the course of the evening in question. (See the depositions Nos. 11, and No. 3 page 13.)